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# Joni Mitchell: new rhythms but no melody lingers on

GG records

NEW NOTES By MIKE DALY



Joni Mitchell

JONI MITCHELL still pursues her highly individual semi-recitative style, discarding melody while her songs serve merely as vehicles for clever inverted lyrics.

But in the double album **Don Juan's Reckless Daughter** (Asylum BB701) she expands her musical field. On the way blues, jazz, Brazilian and free form territory is explored in challenging style.

Joni, who co-opted Weather Report's bassist Jaco Pastorius for her last effort, *Hejira*, has included the group's percussionists Alejandro Acuna and Manolo Badreha, and saxophonist Wayne Shorter on several of the new tracks.

Another new name is orchestrator Mike Gibbs, who has worked successfully in the jazz-classical crossover field.

LA Express drummer John Guerin is back again, plus the vocals of Chaka Khan and Aileto Moreira's surdo (bass drum).

All of this creates a departure from Joni's recent style. But those variously pleading, cynical and nostalgic lover's lyrics still predominate, as the title track indicates.

Most striking is *Paprika Plains* (a metaphor reminiscent of the "geometric farms" of *Amelia*), which paints a dream-like landscape inhabited by ghostly Indians caught up in Joni's stream of consciousness.

The word-images are filled out by the rich instrumentals: Joni on piano and vocals, Jaco Pastorius' resonant bass guitar, Wayne Shorter's lilting soprano sax, John Guerin's drums and Mike Gibbs' undulating orchestration.

The 16-minute track fills one side. Other unusual (for Joni) tracks are the all-percussion *The Tenth*

*World* and the percussion-only accompaniment of *Dreamland*.

The inclusion of J. D. Souther and Glenn Frey's vocal credits on *Off Night Back Street* raised hopes of a straight ballad with original melody line. But no, they merely reinforce the chorus line.

That song does yield some of her most pungent lyrics. Of her rival she sings:

*"She's keeping your house neat  
And your sheets sweet  
And I'm your off night  
back street"*

and:  
*"You give me such pleasure  
You bring me such pain.*

*Who left her long hair  
In our bathtub drain?"*

Best tracks: the bluesy *Cotton Avenue* and frenetic, pathetic *Talk To Me*.

STEELEYE SPAN'S *Storm Force Ten* (Chrysalis L36432) marks the departure of Peter Knight and Bob Johnson, inclusion of John Kirkpatrick and celebrates the return of Martin Carthy.

The result is a reversion to the sweeter vocal harmonies and more traditional material of yore, although the folk-rock beat is still there, if more muted.

I am one of those who applauds this turn of events. The superb, crystalline voice of Maddy Prior is the centrepiece of a wonderfully creative group and by concentrating on the rock market they made too little use of this asset.

Best tracks are the unaccompanied five-part harmony *Sweep Chimney Sweep*, *The Victory*, *Brecht-Weill's The Black Freighter* and the jaunty *Seventeen Come Sunday*, with John Kirkpatrick's accordion leading the group a merry dance.

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**3XY MUSIC SURVEY** January 13 1978

JOHN MARTYN'S *One World* (Island L36457) adds another to his tally of impressive albums.

Here Martyn charts familiar areas with intense love songs like *Couldn't Love You More* (including Steve Winwood on xylophone-sounding Yamaha organ) and Danny Thompson on bowed bass.

He flirts with "do-wop" style on the delightful *Dancing*, allowing his eclecplex guitar phrases to merge with Harry Robinson's strings.

Then, immediately following *Dancing* — one of his most commercial tracks yet — he steers straight into the heady, esoteric *Small Hours*.

His pre-occupation with West Indian rhythms, gives us *Dealer, Smiling Stranger* and *Big Muff*, all utilising percussive eclecplex effects. (The latter including Morris Pert's authentic sounds).

The title track (Martyn said recently that it represented his philosophy of "no passports, no discrimination") allows his unique, slurred vocals to express tenderness within a rhythmic framework.

As Martyn's Australian audience widens, more of his earlier albums are being released locally. The latest to come my way is *Bless The Weather* (Island SIL 934440).

Neil, accompanying himself on piano, recounts his history in showbiz, as songwriter and singer, from his "Connie Francis period" through to his solo emergence and comeback trail.

There are 36 tracks, which is a lot of Sedaka. But his whimsical, camp style is entertaining, if rather saccharine. It's easy to see who influenced Peter Allen.

NEIL SEDAKA fans will appreciate the double album *Neil Sedaka And Songs — A Solo Concert* (Polydor 2672 832), recorded at the London Palladium.